

Anxiety

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[0 : 00] I want to thank you for your great grace upon us and for the way that you have been kind to us in every single moment of every single day.

We thank you for the air that you've given us to breathe and the lungs with which you have held together by the power of your word so that we could breathe that air.

Lord, you have been kinder to us than we deserve and we are thankful to you for that. And I pray that as we walk through this morning and we think about what Paul is saying here, what you are saying through the Holy Spirit to Paul, that it would encourage and strengthen us for the days ahead.

And we pray all this in Christ's name. Amen. Amen. We're in Philippians chapter 4, verse 6 through 9. 6 through 9. I think those kind of run together.

And as you can tell, if you haven't seen it already, we're going to talk about anxiety this morning because that's what Paul talks about. And so we're going to check this out. Let me read the passage for us and then we'll kind of introduce the topic.

[1 : 11] In verse 6, he says, Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.

And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute.

If there's any excellence, if there's anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things. The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things and the God of peace will be with you.

Now, yeah, amen. The psychologists say that there are two major categories of anxiety. One is what they would call situational anxiety.

The other is what they would call generalized anxiety disorder. What's fascinating about these two is that they're very similar in that one is a very specific situation, kind of a one-time moment, if you will, an issue, situation that comes up in which anxiety about this thing comes along and that's where you are.

[2 : 41] And then the other, the disorder, they say, is something that can be triggered by anything and multiple things and lots of things. But here's what I want you to hear. Here from the Mayo Clinic, it says that the symptoms of anxiety disorders are these, feeling nervous, restless, or tense, having a sense of impending danger, panic, or doom, having an increased heart rate, breathing rapidly, sweating, trembling, feeling weak or tired, having trouble concentrating or thinking about anything other than the present worry, having trouble sleeping, experiencing GI problems, having difficulty controlling your worry, having the urge to avoid things that trigger anxiety.

How many of those do you have to have? Well, here's the thing we have to understand about psychology. My undergraduate work was in both psychology and Christian ministries.

And one of the things about psychology is that it's called a soft science. And the reason it's called a soft science is because there's no hard test to see whether certain things exist.

Let me give you an example. If you break a bone, it's very easy to tell what's wrong with you. You can go to the doctor. They can see the fracture. They do the x-ray. They see what is wrong.

If you have diabetes, they can do the blood test. And they can find and discover the issues that are going on for you. If you have some form of heart disease, and there's various kinds, they can see that that's there.

[4 : 19] If you have a blockage, they can put that on the little echocardiogram, and they can find that thing. And they can do other things to find these issues. When it comes to what psychologists

have put forward as these mental illnesses and things, there is not a blood test for many of these things.

There are two that I know of. There are two that I know of that can actually be determined by medical tests. One is schizophrenia, and the other is bipolar disorder type 2.

Is that the one or type 1? Help me out. Which one? I think it is 2. Type 2. Now, here's the thing. You get all this information from what's called the Diagnostic and Statistic Manual.

There's been five versions of these things, and in every version they've edited all the symptoms and everything else. The problem is that diagnosing these things is extremely, extremely subjective.

Most of the time, you go to a medical doctor who's not been trained as a psychologist, and he's looking at basically these symptoms, and if you were to tell him that you have these, and he asks you, well, how long have you had them?

[5 : 30] Well, it's been about a month or two, then all of a sudden he wants to prescribe to you psychotropic drugs that will change and alter your body chemistry. I'm not saying that that's necessarily something to avoid full scale, but I am saying it is something that we should be careful of, because here's what the scriptures say.

From the overflow of the heart, the mouth speaks. Jesus says that. What he is saying, Jesus is saying is that sin comes from us.

I do not sin because I have a medical condition. I might find it harder not to sin because I have a medical condition, just think about sleeplessness for just a second.

If I go through a period of time where I am not able to sleep and not able to sleep, I'm going to have a harder time being nice to you. But if I sin against you and I'm ugly to you, I can't blame that on my sleeplessness.

That's from my heart. What we want to get at is understanding that there are things out there that happen, such as fear and anxiety, that we experience that we ought not to do.

[6 : 50] And we don't want to be as the world is, and that is to blame our biology, blame our chemical makeup, blame our circumstances.

We want to own our sin. And here's why. If you look at your own anxiety and say, well, it's perfectly reasonable for me to feel anxious because of situation, chemical, DNA, then the gospel has no good news for you.

You're stuck in a hopeless place where you're just waiting and hoping that this medicine can counteract DNA, change chemical makeup, or make your circumstances better.

And what I'm saying is that the fear that you're experiencing, the sin that is there, Christ is the answer for. And we want to get to that.

We want to get to that. There is the possibility that some of what people experience in the anxiety has nothing to do with the fear that you have.

[8 : 06] Sometimes you will feel anxiety from a medical condition. And I'm not talking about that. There are some medical conditions, heart disease, thyroid problems, diabetes.

There's a few other medical conditions that like feelings of anxiety will come out and you'll be like, I'm feeling anxious, but I have no idea why. And then you go to the doctor, you find out, oh, you've got thyroid problems.

We're not talking about that necessarily. Although we could probably get into that, but we'll leave that to the side. But I want to talk to us about that situational and maybe even a little past that situational, that sort of disorder that kind of debilitates us just a little bit.

I think that what Paul has to say here gets right to the heart of that. Gets right to the heart of that.

So let's take a look at it. He's given us two things we need to do if we're going to live with anxiety or deal with our anxiety.

And one is to pursue prayer. And so that's verse six and seven. So he gives a command at the very beginning of this. What is that command? Don't worry.

[9 : 11] Do not worry. Be anxious for nothing. This is in a command function.

There is no two ways about this biblically. To be anxious is a sin. Period. Now here's something about this word the word behind this can mean a few things.

This word anxious. It can mean worry or anxiety. And that's the kind of thing Paul's talking about here. It's what Jesus talks about in Matthew chapter six, verse 25 through 34, where he says, don't be worried about what you, your life, what you wear, what you eat, what you drink.

Matter of fact, he goes on to say that this worry is something that you can't add to your life. By this worry. Here's the other thing about this word anxious.

I think, do I have the verse here? No. In first Corinthians chapter seven, Paul uses this exact same Greek word, but it's translated concern.

[10:27] And it's talking about husbands and wives. And it says that if you can stay single, stay single. But if you can't get married, because he says that it's better to be single because someone who's married, a woman who's married to a husband has to be concerned about her husband or a husband who's married has to be concerned about his wife.

And in that case, what he's saying is that there's a kind of care and concern that they have for one another. And he just uses the exact same Greek word. Okay.

Philippians chapter two, verse 20. In the same book that we're in, he talks about Timothy being somebody who's concerned for the Philippians.

And he gives him praise for that. So here's my point. My point is that in anxiety, there's a thing that we're doing. There's a thing that we're doing.

There's a concern and a care and a carefulness in anxiety that we're doing that in one way can be right and good and in another way can be sinful. Does that make sense?

[11:37] Let me see if I can give you an illustration. We all have things that we have to take care of on a daily basis. You're going on a trip.

You've got somebody that's going to the doctor for a visit. You've got to register your car. You've got taxes to pay.

There's all kinds of things that we do on a daily basis. And we can take care of that with concern and carefulness, making sure we do it properly, making sure we have all of our I's dotted and our T's crossed.

But we're not anxious in that moment. But then you know that there's some times as you're doing these daily things that you can be anxious about them. Does that make sense?

So what happens, I think, is it's not about the things that we do, but it's about how we approach the things that we do. Now that's on a small scale. I think on a big scale it's the same way.

[12:35] We begin to think about issues like finding out that we've got some sort of sickness. Right? You hear the news that there's cancer.

Well, you can handle that with concern and care or you can handle that with anxiety. And that's my point about this word is that we're not supposed to be anxious for anything.

We're not to worry about anything because worry is a failure to trust that God is in control. Yes, ma'am? There's an interesting footnote on verse 6.

It says, The Greek word for anxious means to have a mind divided between legitimate thoughts and destructive thoughts. Destructive thoughts will choke out the word of God and cause believers to abandon trust.

Mm-hmm. Right. Worry is a failure to trust God. When something unexpected comes our way, a financial burden, a health scare, a relationship difficulty, heaven does not panic about it and neither should we.

[13:43] We shouldn't panic about it. Tell that to a mom worried about her kid. You know, how many moms, and it's usually the moms, worry about their kids when they're out.

It's all in the perspective of how you, it's your brain and it changes in a second. Yeah. You can change it. Paul would say, Paul would say this, be anxious for nothing.

And, now, we want to dive in a little deeper because he says, be anxious for nothing, but in everything, by prayer, supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. So, instead of being anxious, he wants you to do something else. This is what I consider, what's called put off and put on. As Christians, we're to put off bad behavior and to put on good behavior. You can go to Ephesians chapter 4 and kind of see that. So, the bad behavior is being anxious. The good behavior is prayer. So, let's talk about this prayer for a second. How many different, he uses four different words to describe prayer.

[14:53] What are these four words that he describes prayer with? What? Whatever things are true.

Petition. I'm still in verse 6. Oh, sorry. That's okay. Petition. Right? Petitions. Thanksgiving. Thanksgiving. Present your request to God.

Your request. And then he has the word prayer. There we go. There's four words about prayer. So, prayer itself is just the general term. And by the way, prayer is asking.

A lot of times we want to say prayer is conversation. We might have a conversation with God, but prayer at its heart is asking God for things. We're standing at the throne.

We don't have to come to God and tell Him about everything. We just need to ask. Right?

Supplication. This word comes from the root idea of lacking to be deprived of something.

[15:54] This is that word petition. So, if you come with a supplication, you're asking for what it is you are lacking. Thanksgiving. What's Thanksgiving? Thanking Him.

Yeah. I mean, so here you are in the middle of being anxious and you shouldn't be anxious, so you're trying to go from anxiousness to prayer and a part of that prayer needs to be thanksgiving. Now, why do you think that works? Why do you think that that fits together? I think for me, when I get to that thanksgiving part of it, I've taken one more step over to believing that what I asked for, God heard me.

Okay. And that helps me incredibly. Gratitude. Just feel that thankfulness is a gratitude and gratitude is part of that process of the whole circle.

Right. Right. Right. I also think to ourselves that sometimes when we're anxious it's because, right, we're not believing that God is good or God's going to do something about this and gratitude causes us to look back at all the times that God has been good to us and has been faithful to us.

[17:13] One of the things that God says in the Old Testament to His children, Israel, is He gives them different things for them to do such as Passover, such as the different feasts in order for them to remember the goodness of God.

Why? Why do they need to do that? Because we forget the goodness of God. So gratitude is that way for us to be reminded. You know, because if you, in your early life, maybe you went through something really terrible and now you're going through something that's not quite as bad but all of a sudden the anxious feelings are there, you can be thankful.

It's like, well, God, you took me through that. Surely, you're going to take me through this. Thank you for how you have worked. The last word is request. And this word, it's about specifics.

Specific, specific, specifics. I am surprised at how many people I hear pray that do not pray specifically. We pray very general prayers, right?

So, so you want to ask God specifically, right? You want to go to him and ask him specifically. I think about the parable in Luke chapter 12. There's a guy, he's got somebody who comes to visit him in the middle of the night and so he goes to his neighbor and says, hey, knock, knock, knock, I need some food.

[18:27] his request of his friend is very specific. I need food to be able to feed my friend. You know, that's, that's what we want to do is we want to ask very specific prayers.

Dr. Lawson, Dr. Steve Lawson says this, he says, what are specific needs in your life? What has been weighing you down? What is burdening you? What has become a milestone, excuse me, a millstone around your neck?

What is dragging you down? Here is the ground where anxiety will flourish if unchecked and unchallenged. But this is also the ground where dependent trust and joy can grow as well if we pursue dependent prayer.

So bring your request to God. That's the action you and I need to take. Now verse 7 tells us what's going to happen. We got peace.

We have this peace. What do you think of when you think of the word peace? Stillness.

[19:40] Stillness, quiet, at ease, calm. Okay. That's good. That's good. Kind of a tranquility kind of a thing. So there's two kinds of peace in the Bible.

There's one kind of peace that is objective. We could even say it's legal. And there's another kind of peace in the Bible that is subjective and it's kind of an experience that I have.

I don't necessarily feel this. Right? This objective legal peace is a peace that I have with God because I'm a Christian therefore I'm no longer at enmity with Him.

We've been reconciled together. We're no longer at odds. Now we have peace. That peace is not necessarily something I'm going to feel. It's objective. It's true whether I feel it or not.

Okay? Subjective peace is something we feel. That's that tranquility and that's that calm and quiet that we are talking about here. So with that in mind, one of the things we need to understand is that when the peace of God, that peace of God this should be understood as that subjective peace, that

quiet, that tranquility, knowing God's in control.

[20 : 59] That's the peace of God that he says is going to come. And I would say it's a supernatural peace. A supernatural peace.

Because, number one, it's of God. It belongs to God. It's something that He bestows. It's something that He gives to us.

it can't be explained and it can't be really understood without experiencing it yourself. If you're in the middle of trouble, you're not being anxious but you're praying and God is bestowing that peace upon you, people around you will not understand how it is you're responding to the situation.

Because, because here's, I absolutely believe this is like a condition or a pact with God in that we must pray, we must go through this process, if we have this anxiety, we have to do this thing in order to not be anxious.

And the peace of God that comes to us, when you said it's an anxiousness, I was thinking that it was like an emptiness is what you were saying, but no, that's not what you're saying. You're saying it's the presence of God Himself, and I totally agree.

[22 : 11] That's why I would say it's a supernatural thing, and here's the thing about this whole thing, when you look at this and you say, okay, I'm in the middle of something, I'm praying, the peace of God is supposed to come to me, but let me ask you this, what is not, what is not promised in this passage?

That your circumstances will change. I think it's very important for us to really grasp that the promise is not to change the circumstances.

The promise is to change us. To go through those circumstances. Right. It says that this peace is going to guard your heart and your mind.

This word guard is a military term. It's the post of the guard. He's guarding your heart and your mind. God's supernatural peace, his presence is keeping fear and anxiety out of the heart because we're praying to him rather than being anxious.

It results in the anxiety being gone. Our heart is guarded against this. I think part of this, I think part of this guarding of our hearts and our minds is guarding us against apostasy and blasphemy.

[23 : 44] I want you to think about this because we want the tranquility and I believe that that will come. We have to get to the verses 8 and 9 as well.

However, part of why our hearts and minds need to be guarded is because when we feel anxious and we don't feel like God's changing things or changing us or it's not worth, we will have a tendency, a temptation to believe that maybe God's not powerful enough, maybe he's not good enough, maybe he wasn't aware, and we are heart, so if you come out of a time still holding on, God is good, then I think that's an example of, or at least a testimony too, that God has absolutely guarded you through that time.

I'll take the peace of God over changing my circumstances any day. Right. Let's look at the second part then, and this is verse 8 and 9, so we have this verse 8 where he says that whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is good repute, if there's any excellence, if anything's worthy of praise, and in mine, it uses this word here, to dwell on these things.

Let's talk about that word for a second. As you think about dwell, maybe you have other translations, what does this word mean? Consider, think about, live in, abide, anybody else? My Bible says meditate. Meditate, okay, so here's what's interesting, this particular Greek word is where we get our English word for logic and logarithms.

[25 : 37] It's a mathematical term, right? So it's an idea of calculating, it's careful consideration, is what this is. So he's saying that there are certain things we should think about, we should put forth effort, but not thoughtless effort, and it's a present tense verb, which means it's continual, there's not a day that you let up doing this, because our thinking shapes our behavior.

And let me say it this way, we have, whether you like it or not, everybody has a creedal theology, that is a theology of the mind, things that you say you believe, but then we also have a theology of the heart, things that we actually believe.

and when we encounter this world, we begin to live out of our hearts, so the things we believe from our heart may be contrary to the things we say in our head.

And so, what we want is we want to shape our minds to think the right way, but for that to get to the heart. You've heard the old expression, right, you know, that somebody say we had head

knowledge, no heart knowledge kind of a thing.

That's what we're talking about. Because it goes beyond just your salvation. It goes into every area of theology. Is God good? Well, yeah, we all say that right here, but in the middle of trouble, do you have doubts?

[27 : 07] Because if you do, then there's a disconnect. It may be only small, and it may only happen for a fraction of a second before you correct yourself, but it's still there.

Our thinking shapes our behavior. So there's a duality, there's a duality of faithfulness. Seven, the peace of God, God is faithful.

This is what he will restore unto you, place unto you. And then verse eight is, if we are faithful, we will facilitate that peace by doing these things. Right, so look at these things.

There's these attributes, these are things that describe the kinds of things we're to think about, that we're to dwell on. Okay, what's true, as opposed to falsehood, right, what God's word says is true, right, his word describes reality, not my experience.

As a matter of fact, we experience things that many times his word says something contrary to our experience and we have to redefine our experience based upon his word.

[28 : 14] His word is the only infallible, inerrant, sufficient source of knowledge. Honorable, whatever is honorable, that is noble, dignified, lofty, in other words, get your minds off base things, stop thinking about things that are down here and bring your thoughts up here, put your thoughts heavenwardly, right, get your heart up there.

Right, this has to do with the idea of righteousness, things that are according to the standard of righteousness. Pure, right, pure, now this word is a little different from the normal word for pure, but the idea is that it's unmixed.

It's unmixed. It's the idea of holiness. Lovely is ethical beauty, beauty of holiness, pleasing, attractive.

God is the one who defines what is pleasing, of good repute, well spoken, highly regarded, excellent. So this is kind of a summary idea.

He brings in this excellence, excellence, and this is whatever reflects the holiness of almighty God, that which is morally excellent and pleasing. Our affections will be consumed with his perfect, pleasing will.

[29 : 31] And then the last thing is worthy of praise. That is, whatever is or can be praised by God. Whatever is praiseworthy is not about whether we could praise it, but whether God could praise it.

something that could be done before God and be applauded and God gives great approval to this. So here's the thing, each one of these virtues, this is my contention, I think that each one of these virtues in its most central aspect is a description of the Lord Jesus Christ.

This is who he is. The more we keep our minds on him, I think Colossians chapter 3 verses 1 through 3 is a great parallel to this, that we're to set our minds on things above where Christ is, seated at the right hand of the Father.

Not on things on earth, right, because those are transient and they're passing away to things that are in heaven where he is, because we have been crucified in him and we have died and our life is hidden in Christ with God.

So we've got this whole big thing of get your mind right here, but then look at verse 9, because this comes right on the heels of it, he says then, things that you have, he's got four things there, you see those four things?

[30 : 47] Things you have learned and received and heard and seen where? In me. Who's the me?

Paul. That's Paul. So he wants you to do what with the things that you've seen in him? Practice these things. Okay, so not only do we have verse 8 talking about how we ought to think, we've got verse 9 telling us how we ought to live, and we ought to live following the example of Paul.

The things that they have learned, received, heard, and seen. Paul wants them to follow his example, and what's the promise here in this verse?

peace will be with you. And the God of peace will be with you. I don't think it's an accident to have the peace of God and the God of peace.

Because you can't have peace with God without having the presence of God himself. We can't have this peace without him.

[31 : 57] Purity of mind then, this purity of mind and our devotion and our actions, right? So this verse here is talking about our purity of mind, the things we think about, along with then, verse 9,

how we live this out, the things we do to live these things out.

We can't have peace of heart without having purity of mind. I think this is where, for me, just in practical living, a lot of places have kind of broken down in trying to talk to people and think about my own self, when there's an anxious temptation to anxiety.

I've known about verse 6 and 7, but I haven't seen verse 8 and 9 needing to come with it, but it does. They need to go together because it's not just pray, but it's also get your thoughts in the right place.

Think on the right things. Start living the right way. The victory and the battle that we have against our anxious thoughts is to battle at the level of the thoughts, and God has given us both prayer and a pattern of thought to help us fight these things.

Prayer and purity are the two keys to the life of peace, and the more that we practice these things, the more we can avoid being anxious in the middle of the circumstances.

[33 : 23] I just want to hold on to the fact that what we're promised in scripture is prayer and thought are the things that he makes the promises about. These other things are very helpful and if it's helpful to you to do that then by all means, but he doesn't promise that doing that is going to bring this.

He promises that if prayer and our thought life that's what he promises about peace. of God. The peace of God. You may feel relieved by the peaceful, but the peace of God is something different. Well, I'm not sure how. Well, I mean, like I said, people can go into these areas or other places and feel peaceful, feel lack of anxiety.

Right. That's not the same thing That's right. That's right. Now I understand what you're saying.

Yes, ma'am? Well, I think at the beginning it says, you know, practice. When you get up in the morning, thank God.

Thank God for his goodness of waking you up in the first place. Yeah. And then, pray and continue to practice of asking for whatever the day is going to bring.

[34 : 31] Yeah. And I think you can start in the right place and it'll follow through the day if you continue to practice. Practice.

That's a good point. That's a good point. I'm not so sure it's location. It's just everyday life, what you're doing everyday life. And I know for me, personally, my default is in a crisis or an emergency or a city or whatever, is to be calm.

And I know there's no doubt why I'm calm. It's because of what you talked about today. And I've had to deal with a lot of disasters, you know, things like that, hurricanes, whatever, fires.

I immediately go calm. I don't go fight a fight and fry. It is so peaceful. It is so much strength that you have by doing that and you have so many others too.

Alright, so I've got some questions for you here on the back side. And so I guess why don't we'll let y'all turn around your tables and turn around the chairs and talk to those behind you and after a little bit I'll bring us together.

[35 : 42] Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.